OSPREY RESTORATION

Osprey, commonly called the fish hawk or fish eagle, is neither a true hawk nor eagle. Ospreys are cosmopolitan and occur worldwide with the exception of Antarctica. The species is of ancient lineage and presently is classified near the kite family. There are four subspecies presently recognized, two occurring in North America, P.H. carolinenses and P.H. ridgwayi. Ridgwayi is found in the Bahamas and Caribbean, while carolinensis is the Midwestern species. Carolinensis is migratory in its northern range and resides in south Florida and possibly part of the Gulf coast and northwest Mexico.

Ospreys were never confirmed to historically nest in Iowa, but were probably here given the abundance of lakes and wetlands that dotted the prairie. Ospreys are very unwary birds and territorially appear weak. Pairs will nest colonially. Nests may be upon structure, manmade or natural, that provides a platform, but Ospreys have been known to nest on the ground. Nests are generally at least one-foot deep and four to five feet wide, are made of sticks and lined with grass. Highest productivity is attained on power poles and nesting platforms.

Ospreys were heavily affected by the biocide crash of the 1950s. Populations were severely reduced throughout the range but hardest hit in the Great Lakes and Atlantic coast. A strong fidelity to ancestral breeding areas slowed range expansion into vacant and newly created habitat since the DDT era.

With construction of lakes by Department of Natural Resources and reservoirs by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, potential osprey habitat exists that was previously not available. There are numerous osprey summer sightings in Iowa, but apparently these young, non-breeding ospreys return to northern areas for mating and nesting. Despite this population growth, ospreys have demonstrated little breeding range expansion. Minnesota and Wisconsin DNR officials suggest that ospreys, in our lifetime, do not readily pioneer new breeding ranges. Instead they experience suppressed reproduction as density of breeders increases. To address this issue, young ospreys from Wisconsin and Minnesota are being relocated to areas with suitable habitat in southern Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Ohio.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has assisted conservation partners with technical assistance, encouragement, and fish to successfully release ospreys in Iowa. The Macbride Raptor Project located near Coralville Reservoir has spearheaded this work. Beginning in 1997 four or five young ospreys have been released annually at their facility. Since that time, personnel at the Hartman Reserve Nature Center in Cedar Falls initiated a release at their facility in 1998. Staff of Boone County Conservation Board and Polk County Conservation Board coordinated a release at Saylorville Reservoir in 2000. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has provided distinguished service for releases at Coralville and Saylorville Reservoir respectively. Assisted by literally hundreds of volunteers, these conservation organizations have devoted their efforts to bring ospreys to Iowa as a nesting species. A four-year minimum commitment of releasing ospreys is required at each site. Project fundraising

is the responsibility of the conservation organizations doing the releases. Ospreys cost about $500 per bird.

In Iowa, ospreys have two bands, a silver U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band and a numbered, **lavender** band on separate legs. Forty-eight ospreys have been released at the three sites since 1997.

Beginning in 2000 Osprey released in SW Minnesota by Minnesota DNR, built a nest atop a microwave tower near Cayler Prairie in NW Iowa. In late winter Great-horned Owls were seen at the nest and tending young, however by April the Ospreys were once again nesting at the site. Incubation appeared to be progressing, but ultimately the nesting attempt failed. It was believed extremely violent storms were a factor in the demise of the nesting attempt. A second pair was also observed nest building in the Spirit Lake area. At Coralville reservoir a 1998 released Osprey was nest building with two other unidentified adult Osprey. The adults were seen feeding the year-class of 2001.

In 2002 the Spirit Lake pair nested on a platform at the outdoor classroom area of Spirit Lake school. Tim Waltz with Big Sioux Wildlife unit coordinated the pole/platform placement at the school. In early July a single egg was discovered by Ed Heidenbrink and Don Poggensee, but no young were produced at the site. Also on a pole/platform near Cayler Prairie a nest was constructed at that site.

At Coralville reservoir a nest was constructed by A5 (Macbride 1998) and an unbanded female, but apparently no eggs were laid. These birds were joined by H2 (2000 Saylorville) feeding young hacked birds. Four Wisconsin osprey were placed at the site. However, two young died from heat stress prior to release.

At Saylorville a pair of wild birds E4 (Hartman 2000) and E1 (Macbride 2000) appeared at the site, strafing released birds and causing excitement. Five additional osprey were hacked from the site.

At Hartman Reserve Nature Center four additional Osprey were hacked in 2002.

In 2003 the Spirit Lake pair successfully nested at the outdoor classroom of spirit lake Middle School. One chick was banded July 10, 2003 the first Osprey chick to be banded in Iowa since European settlement of the area. The adult female was banded B/T and released in 1997 near Minnetonka, Minnesota by the Minnesota DNR. The heritage of the adult male is unknown.

Also in 2003 three Osprey chicks were produced at Macbride Recreational Area near Coralville Reservoir. The Macbride Raptor Project observed that the male, A5, was released from their facility in 1998. The female, H2, was released at Saylorville Reservoir by Polk County Conservation Board in 2000.

Fourteen additional Osprey are were released at Hartman Reserve Nature Center near Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Don Williams Lake by Boone County Conservation Board, and Saylorville Reservoir by Polk County Conservation Board. Hopefully those Osprey will prosper and banding young will occur at their sites in 2004.

This project is in keeping with the IA DNR mission to protect, propagate, increase, and preserve the wildlife of the state (Section 456A.23, Code of Iowa, 1997). Establishing as Osprey population will improve the state's wildlife diversity and increase the public's appreciation of wetland

ecology. There is a goal of five nesting pairs with the potential for another five breeding pairs located in the state by 2006.

Table 13.1. Osprey releases in Iowa 1997 - Present.

Year	Location	USFWS#	Color Band	Comments
1997	Macbride Raptor Project	608-48727		
		608-48728		
		608-48729		
		608-48730		
		608-48735		
			Lavender bands	
1998	Macbride Raptor Project	608-48745	A8	
		608-48746	A6	
		608-48747	A5	Returned to Coralville 2001
		608-48748	A7	with two other adults, one banded- unidentified, other adult unbanded
	Hartman Reserve Nature Center	608-48741	A1	
		608-48742	A2	
		608-48743	A3	
		608-48744	A4	
1999	Macbride Raptor Project	788-23203	C1	
		788-23205	C3	
		788-23207	C5	
		788-23208	C6	
	Hartman Reserve Nature Center	788-23204	C2	
		788-23206	C4	
		788-23209	C7	
		788-23210	C8	
2000	Macbride Raptor Project	788-23212	E1	
		788-23217	E6	
		788-23218	E7	
		788-23220	E0	
	Hartman reserve Nature Center	788-23213	E3	
		788-23214	E2	Fracture wing in box, released MRP after rehab.
		788-23215	E4	
		788-23216	E5	
		788-23219	E8	
	Saylorville - Polk & Boone Co.	788-23223	H0	
		788-23225	H1	
		788-23222	H2	
		788-23224	H3	
		788-23221	H4	
2001	Macbride Raptor Project	788-23228	H6	
		788-23229	H7	
		788-23232	K0	
		788-23234	K2	
	Hartman Reserve Nature	788-23227	H5	
		788-23230	H8	
		788-23231	H9	
		788-23233	K1	
	Saylorville	788-23223	H0	
		788-23225	H1	
		788-23222	H2	
		788-23224	H3	
		788-23221	H4	

Table 13.1. Osprey releases in Iowa 1997 - Present.

Year	Location	USFWS#	Color Band	Comments
2002	Macbride	788-23243	K3	
		788-23245	K5	
		788-23246	K6	Died heat stress
		788-40802	J3	Died heat stress
		788-40844		Rehabbed bird from Raptor Center
	Hartman	788-23244	K4	
		788-23247	K7	
		788-23250	K9	
		788-23248	K8	
	Saylorville	788-23241	J4	
		788-23242	J5	
		788-23249	J1	
		788-40801	J2	
		788-40803	J0	
2003	Hartman	788-49506	J6	
		788-49507	J7	
		788-49508	J8	
		788-49509	J9	
	Don Williams	788-49519	N9	
		788-49510	N0	
		788-49511	N1	
		788-49512	N2	
		788-49513	N3	
	Saylorville	788-49514	N4	
		788-49515	N5	
		788-49516	N6	
		788-49517	N7	
		788-49518	N8	